

Includes Over \$14.6 Million in Funding for San Antonio, Del Rio

WASHINGTON, DC-Late last night Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted for the bipartisan Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 5658). Several programs in San Antonio and one in Del Rio will receive \$14.62 million through the bill. This funding comes on top of the \$45 million for Fort Sam Houston and the full funding of BRAC announced last week in the Emergency Supplemental Bill which passed the Senate yesterday evening.

"We must continue to fund our military so that we remain the best in the world," said Rodriguez. "I am proud to support a plan that gives these courageous men and women a pay raise and provides them with the equipment they need. Our plan honors our troops while working to end our readiness crisis and strengthen our military."

This measure will provide the necessary resources and authorities to quickly and efficiently reverse declining trends in military readiness, and will also provide our service members in harm's way with the best gear and force protection possible. Under the bill, our troops will get better health care, better pay, and the benefits they have earned.

Below are specific programs based in San Antonio and Del Rio:

\$2 million for Dark Screen at The Center for Infrastructure Assurance and Security (CIAS) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), which has gained a national reputation as the go-to organization for cyber security issues in communities and states. This project will help the Department of Defense examine ways in which they can take a more active role in helping prepare communities in general, and specifically those in which Defense Department installations exist, to prevent, detect, respond to and recover from cyber attacks.

\$4.39 million for Live Fire Exercise Shoothouse which would allow for construction of a standard design live fire exercise shoothouse at Camp Bullis in San Antonio. This project allows for soldiers and units to attain and maintain the greatest proficiency for live fire training in urban environments.

\$1.44 million for design and planning a Student Officer Quarters at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio . □ Unaccompanied Officer Quarters space to house student pilots is a high

priority for Laughlin AFB. Currently there is an inadequate amount of space available to house student pilots.

\$4.8 million for Fire Resistant Fuels for the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio to be used for testing a formulation that will save lives and prevent injuries to soldiers whose vehicle is ignited after being struck by a rocket propelled grenade, IED or other form of hostile fire

\$2 million for Rapid Economic Defense Tech Identification (REDTIE) for San Antonio based Cenovance which will allow for the testing and assessment of new military capabilities that could be used for both commercial and military uses. This funding will also allow for local economic growth by allowing the government to purchase privately created technologies that will benefit the military.

Other Projects that Affect Troops and Veterans Include:

Providing Needed Military Equipment and Training for Our Troops

- Authorizes \$8.6 billion to address the Army's equipment reset requirements in FY 2009, and \$1.8 billion to address the equipment reset needs of the Marine Corps. This will enable the two services to address their critical shortfalls of equipment.
- Authorizes nearly \$2 billion for unfunded readiness initiatives requested by the services including filling shortages in our pre-positioned equipment stockpiles, expanded training opportunities for the Army, and needed maintenance for Army aircraft.

Build up the Strained National Guard and Reserve

- Authorizes an additional \$800 million beyond the President's request for the procurement of critical, high-priority equipment for the National Guard and Reserve. The funding is specifically provided to address critical unfunded equipment shortfalls of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

Expand the Number of Troops to Meet Our Commitments and Reduce Strain

- Continues to increase the size of the active-duty Army and Marine Corps. For FY 2009, the bill provides that the Army will grow by 7,000 soldiers to 532,400, and the Marine Corps' ranks will grow by 5,000 to 194,000.

Restore Military Barracks

- Authorizes an additional \$650 million to improve the quality of our military barracks, which are in a severe state of dilapidation around the U.S. causing significant quality of life issues for our soldiers at multiple installations. Of the \$650 million, \$500 million will go to the Army. Unfortunately, the President failed to request sufficient funding for this purpose.

Protecting Our Troops in Harm's Way

Ensuring Our Troops in Harm's Way Have the Protective Equipment They Need

- Authorizes \$2.6 billion to procure, sustain, transport, and field Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for our troops overseas. Additionally, DOD is required to report on the current status of the MRAP program and any future plans to field enough vehicles for training.
 - Authorizes \$947 million for Up-Armored Humvees.
 - Authorizes \$783 million for the continued procurement and enhancement of personal body armor.
 - Directs DOD to establish an executive agent for personal body armor and create a specific budget line item for body armor and other personnel protection equipment. Also requires DOD to report on the current status of the body armor industrial base and the strategic plan for sustaining it over time.
 - Directs the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) to take the lead in efforts to characterize the signatures of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in order to develop better detection methods.

Supporting Our Troops and Their Families

Giving the Military a Pay Raise

- Provides all service members a pay raise of 3.9 percent -- 0.5 percent more than the President's budget request.
- Extends the authority for the Defense Department to offer bonuses and incentive pay.

Improving Health Care for Our Troops & Military Retirees

- Preserves health benefits by rejecting the increased premiums and co-pays in TRICARE and TRICARE retail pharmacy program for service members and retirees, which were proposed by the President. This will save beneficiaries \$1.2 billion in health care costs.
- Establishes a series of Preventive Health Care Projects that focus on reducing the need for care, rather than the amount of care available or the number of people who have coverage. Preventive care initiatives include:
 - o Providing an allowance for individuals who seek preventive health services.
 - o Waiving co-payments for preventive services for all TRICARE beneficiaries.
 - o Providing a smoking cessation program, including classes and nicotine replacement.
- Establishes a Hearing Loss Center of Excellence.
- Establishes a DOD School of Nursing, to address the critical nursing shortage in our military services.

Improving Family Support for Military Families

- Authorizes \$3.2 billion to support and expand quality housing for all service members and their families.
- Authorizes an additional \$15 million, beyond the President's request, to expand family support programs - at a time of great stress for military families.
- Authorizes \$50 million to help local educational agencies providing support to our military children, with an additional \$15 million for those heavily impacted by force structure changes.
- Authorizes DOD to pay a portion of a second family separation allowance when both military parents are deployed simultaneously.
- Authorizes tuition assistance and training opportunities for military spouses seeking careers that can be maintained as they move from station to station.

Expanding Suicide Prevention

- Takes steps to expand suicide prevention in the Armed Forces, including requiring a study of providing second opinions to potentially suicidal service members in a combat theater.

Miscellaneous

- Establishes a Career Intermission Pilot Program, which provides greater flexibility for officer and enlisted personnel management by allowing a service member to be released from active duty for a maximum of three years to focus on professional goals outside the military.
- Permanently prohibits service members from being charged for meals at military treatment facilities while undergoing medical recuperation or therapy.

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Congressman **Ciro D. Rodriguez** (TX-23) serves as a Member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee. For more information about Rodriguez, see his website at <http://www.rodriguez.house.gov/>.